

Black History Month Allyship Workshop
13 February 2021
Before Intermission

What we want to do in this session:

- Define allyship.
- Provide tips on how to be a good ally.
- Identify different methods of allyship.

Learning Objectives – Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Understand what an ally is.
2. Find resources to educate themselves about social justice.
3. Feel empowered to converse about race.
4. Understand the need for allyship.
5. See the benefits of being a good ally (in self-improvement, empathy, strong leadership).

Session Notes:

- Whenever someone contributes (answering a question etc.) ALWAYS respond to them. If you do not, they will not be likely to contribute again. Possible responses:
 - thank you
 - yes! That's a great point
 - wow! That answer connects back to the concept of --- blah blah
- If someone responds with something that is counter-productive, still engage with them
 - interesting point, would anyone agree or disagree?
 - this is a great method to throw it out to the rest of the crowd and see if anyone can argue back about what we want to communicate
 - ask them why they think that way (not as an attack)
 - building golden bridges
- Print out the script and mark it up with how you'd like to word things
- **Bold** the important stuff
- Try to couch this session in your own experiences and the experiences of your group. The experiences you can be most informed about are generally your own.
- **Be aware of your tone** so as not to condescend to the audience. The intent of the workshop is for everyone to leave with a positive experience and outlook.
- One of the main goals of this workshop is to inspire conversations to happen outside of here, so please encourage your group to become comfortable discussing these topics in a comfortable setting.

STATE: Thank you for joining us today for a conversation about allyship. We are going to run through some key points, pose some questions, and share some experiences. The conversation will be divided into these subcategories:

PRESENT SLIDE:

A. What is an ally?

B. How to be a good ally

- C: Different methods of allyship
- D: White Fragility
- E: Breaking down stereotypes
- F: Interacting with Black culture

SAY: But first, I wanna introduce myself. (Work on introductions in practice groups)

Introductions guidance:

1. Talk about why you are leading the discussion.
2. Talk about any personal experience or read off of BlackatUsna to demonstrate the reality of the current situation.

SAY: Now, let's go around and introduce ourselves in this breakout room.

Guiding questions for introductions amongst the group

- Name
- Company
- Why you signed up for the workshop

STATE: Today, we are going to be discussing social issues that everyone has different levels of experience with. It is important that we establish some rules for this small group so that we can have an effective conversation.

PRESENT: (blank slide and input what people suggest)
 Suggestions: rules for online environment (like raising hand, putting in chat to raise hand etc) (rules about respect/ open mindedness) (not cutting someone off)

What is an ally

ASK: We are going to start with the most fundamental question: what do you think is an ally? What have you heard about allyship? Who wants to provide a definition about what it means, in your life or ideally?

- working off preconceived notions and perceptions

ASK: What are some qualities of a good ally?

- (suggestions: proactive, assertive, eager to educate themselves, eager to have discussions with others, a good listener)

STATE: An 'ally' is a leader committed to rooting out all forms of oppression around them through active listening, constant education, material support, and meaningful conversation.

What is the purpose of allyship? Allyship is necessary to combat all forms of oppression and bigotry. One of the main systems of oppression that faces the Black community is white supremacy[1], although other identities often intersect with a person's race. An individual from a marginalized community cannot easily cast away the weight of their identity (or identities) shaped through oppression on a whim. They carry that weight every single day, for better or for worse. An ally understands that this is a weight that they, too, must be willing to carry if they want to advance the causes of marginalized groups.

Being an ally doesn't necessarily mean you fully understand what it feels like to be oppressed. It means you're taking on the struggle as your own.

As military leaders, we need to know the people around us. Part of this journey is also knowing yourself. Being an ally is a practice that will help with your own character development as well as creating an effective work environment for your division.

How to be a good ally

How can we be good allies? We have come up with three key tenants: learn, converse, and reflect.

It is important to remember that being an ally is a constant effort. These steps are not a one-time achievement, but a lifetime commitment. Attending this workshop is a good indication that you want to learn more, and we will provide you with some tools to get started.

The first step in the alliance process is education. The histories of black and many other minority groups are not heavily focused on in schools. Still, it is essential to understand the past in order to heal from it and move on into the future. Luckily, the internet and social media provide many easily accessible resources.

ASK:

Has anyone in the group found any good ways to stay culturally aware?

STATE:

Education does not just mean "go out and read a bunch of books," especially if you don't like to read for fun. Gaining awareness should not involve drastically altering your lifestyle. This may work at first, but it is easier to lose steam if you are trying to establish brand new habits. Instead, make it fit into the things you already do- if you're into movies, start watching documentaries that educate on race, if you are into podcasts- listen to one podcast a week that explains the elements of systemic racism. If you like reading the news, set out to read more

articles that elevate black voices and experiences. Add continuing education with a natural and genuine transition into your life. [click here for recommendations](#)

The more you understand an issue, the better you can communicate it to others and be an ally to those who need you.

The second step in the alliance process is reflection. In addition to understanding the effect you have on the people around you, being aware of how you think and interact with the world will help you be more successful in all areas of your life.

In the context of race and identity issues, the ability to conduct honest introspection will enhance your ability to both be an ally and solve problems. This honesty implies that you examine yourself under a critical lens through introspection.

If you have not thought about race before, ask yourself why. If you did not have conversations about it in your home, think about how you may want to start having conversations and expanding your perspective.

The third step in the alliance process is practice. In the military, separate branches hold joint exercises to overcome differences in culture and improve efficacy and teamwork.

In the same way, as allies, we want to practice the art of conversation so we can both learn from it, and foster trust and understanding with everyone. Practicing good conversation habits will make it much easier to navigate hard conversations or hold people accountable when we need to. It also translates to calmer conversations, fewer awkward greetings in the hallways, and the ability to communicate effectively when tensions do rise.

I'm sure we all have heard something someone said that didn't sit right or demonstrated someone's racial bias. It is common for people to ignore such comments, in the hope that they will stop or in hopes that the person just made a mistake. But, it is important to be proactive and engage with the person.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CE4Pa1HFSDU/?igshid=pbmqmee5a3db>

Do not think of these conversations as arguments where you are trying to win over the other person. Instead, think of it as an opportunity to have the other person see your perspective, or open their mind a bit more. Try to build "golden bridges," by connecting with the other person. Use phrases such as "I used to

struggle with this concept"... or "It took me a while to understand" so that it makes it smoother for the person to be able to see your perspective.

Methods of Allyship

There are many methods to allyship. They include active listening, constant education, material support, and meaningful conversation.

The first method is listening. As allies, we should reach out to family, friends, and peers who are impacted by oppression. Being a good friend, peer, and leader means being empathetic and supportive.

Listening does not mean asking POC for them to educate you on their history or asking invasive questions about how they have been hurt in the past.

THIS MAY BE WHEN PEOPLE START TO GET BORED, SO TRY TO ENGAGE THE AUDIENCE HERE AND ASK FOR INPUT.

scenarios/ practice conversations:

- ask who would intervene
- what should be done next??
- get from usna earlier than 2018

POLLS!!!

- who has been affected by a discriminative act etc
- "does anyone wanna expand upon their answer?"

PRESENT SLIDE:

Methods of allyship: [2]

1. listening
 - i. check-in
 1. reach out to family, friends, peers who are impacted by oppression
 - ii. uplift and show your support
 1. follow and post anti-oppression/ social justice orgs on social media
2. educating self
 - a. outlined above
3. educating others[3][4]
 - a. start conversations

- i. You are likely going to be able to reach an audience that would not give the time of day to a minority individual. You can flex that privilege and access to impact the viewpoints of others.[5]
- b. adding in point about social media being the last part (passions etc) [6]
- c. define virtue signaling and performative woke-ness
 - i. After the killing of George Floyd, this country saw a large uptake in social activism participation. Social media was transformed and comments were made calling out people who did not add to the conversation. As a result, some people felt pressure to post something. Positive pressure is a good thing, but not if the post was the only action that person took. A good word of advice for social media is to only post about something you are passionate about. Especially because people will engage with your content and you should be able to back it up. Social media should be one of the later steps in someone's relation to an issue. It should not be a first step.[7][8]

"Your social media is a reflection of you. It can and will likely change on your journey with different issues, but we hope that you will be taking other actions as well. Bringing allyship into the social media part of your life is something that is nice to do, but it is not the only thing that you should be doing in order to be an ally."

- 4. supporting/ encouraging
 - a. join ecas on the yard
 - b. Not on the Yard
 - i. Real World Org: Standing Up for Racial Justice (National Ally Group)
 - c. attend protests
 - d. support businesses and artists engaged in equity work
 - i. Do we want to include direct actions/personal wealth redistribution?[9][10]
 - 1. Example: <https://www.instagram.com/newwxrldnetwork/>
- 5. initiating/ preventing
 - a. contribute to legislation/ policy changes
 - b. use your skills to contribute to a cause
 - c. continue to check in and center yourself around the voices you are fighting for
- 6. leadership strategies
 - a. how can we lead as naval leaders
 - i. being proactive, correcting anything that is racially insensitive
 - ii. Standing up for Sailors/Marines who experience marginalization and discrimination, being educated on CMEQ processes
 - iii. Asking Sailors and Marines about their own unique perspectives to encourage diversity of thought
 - iv. Holding dialogues with our Sailors/Marines on how they are affected by national and international events
 - v. Encouraging community service among your unit, in order to build a team and foster a sense of belonging

INTERMISSION

After Intermission D-F

What we want to do:

- Introduce white fragility as something that allies may encounter in themselves and others
- Give sources of white fragility and give strategies to combat it
- Break down/ give a history of Black stereotypes in the US
- Comment on the harm of Black stereotypes that inform our perceptions on Black people in media and in real life
- Provide strategies to identify stereotypes and talking points that others may use against the Black community
- Recognize the widespread impact of Black culture on pop culture, but also that Black culture is not a monolith (it includes African American, African, Caribbean, and other diaspora cultures)
- Recognize that allyship and cultural appreciation can go hand in hand, but that there is a line we must be cautious of so as not to appropriate Black culture

Learning Objectives - Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify white fragility responses in themselves and others.
2. Respond to white fragility reactions and help foster discussions with peers about their reactions.
3. Identify different stereotypes of Black people that have been popularized throughout American history.
4. Recognize the impact of stereotypes on their surroundings and the perceptions of themselves and those around them.
5. Explain the wide variety of cultures that resulted from the African diaspora and recognize the impacts of the diaspora on modern culture.

Facilitator

Idea: ask people if -- certain words make you feel uncomfortable in a poll

STATE: Welcome back everyone. I hope that you enjoyed a quick break from the first half of our workshop. During this second part of the workshop we will be discussing perspectives on race and culture that might impact us as allies and in our daily lives. Before we begin, I am going to present a few polls to the group about their comfortability with certain topics and phrases. We are planning on facing discomfort today, so please answer truthfully. We with our discussions, and we hope to address the concerns anyone might have as these topics arise.

POLL: Question: Stereotypes

Answers: Comfortable, Uncomfortable

POLL: Question: Microaggressions

Answers: (see above)

POLL: Question: Code Switching	Answers: (see above)
POLL: Question: Cultural Appropriation	Answers: (see above)
POLL: Question: White Fragility	Answers: (see above)

STATE: Thank you all for filling out these polls. We will use them to gauge the conversations we will be having in this second half so that everyone can hopefully feel comfortable expressing their discomfort, at the very least. I would like to remind everyone that we are all here to respect one another.

STATE: One of the first topics that might come to mind, and one of the most pervasive constructions of race in our minds is the concept of a stereotype. We might also call a stereotype a *group schema*, something that we should have all heard in plebe leadership. As a schema, stereotypes lead us to assign the attributes of a *prototype* of a certain group of people that our brains create from our experiences and memories. That gives our subconscious a lot of power over how we approach everyday situations, and this can be incredibly impactful in how we make decisions that affect ourselves and others. Before we begin the majority of our discussion, I would like to ask the group a question: Do we think that stereotypes are harmful or helpful?

POLL: Question: Are stereotypes harmful or helpful? Answers: Harmful, Helpful, Mix of Both

[Present the results of the poll]

ASK: I notice that we have a few answers of x. Would anyone like to tell the group why they chose that response?

[Group discussion]

ASK: Where do we think that the schemas come from that inform us most in our daily lives?

[open the floor for answers from the group and any stories; really looking for your childhood home, school, and the media you consume]

STATE: Thank you all for the examples. Now that we have a good basis for understanding how schemas and stereotypes might be formed, we can take a step back and actually view some of the historically widespread stereotypes of Black people. Please keep in mind that these have helped inform views of Black people over the course of centuries.

PRESENT: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/popular-and-pervasive-stereotypes-african-americans>

STATE: Now that we have some historical basis for stereotypes, I would like to discuss some of the negative effects of stereotypes with the group. You are free to interject and any from your own personal experience, but no one is required to share.

STATE: These examples use stereotypes in some broad terms, but they tend to illustrate the unconscious attitudes that many people can and do hold towards Black people.

STATE: Oftentimes on job applications, employers discriminate against applicants with non-white sounding names (<https://www.verywellmind.com/harmful-psychological-effects-of-racial-stereotyping-5069394>). Additionally, white applicants do not have to apply to as many jobs to receive a callback (<https://www.nber.org/digest/sep03/employers-replies-racial-names>). One 2018 study demonstrated that anti-Black hiring discrimination was just as prevalent three years ago as it was in 1989. It's only been three years since then.

This next example might drive some passions high, but it is something serious to consider. One system greatly informed by stereotypes is criminal justice and policing. In some of the most recent history we have, the injustices often found in these areas often end in violence and, in the worst cases, death for Black people and other marginalized communities. Stereotypes can cyclically drive discrimination and further stereotyping as Black people are cast as criminal villains on late night news.

I am going to open the floor for some group discussion on any more stereotypes that the group would like to discuss, and we will begin a short discussion on microaggressions afterwards. I am also going to share a link to the Harvard implicit biases test. This is something that you all may want to do after the conclusion of the workshop.

SHARE: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

[Discussion of Stereotypes]

STATE: Thank you everyone for your stories. Moving into our next topic, I would like to ask, just what is a microaggression? [DISCUSS]

STATE: Merriam Webster defines it as “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)” This definition hints at the important fact that microaggressions are often the result of our unconscious racial biases and stereotypes.

ASK: Does anyone have any examples of microaggressions that they would like to share or any questions? [can add in examples below if group contributions are lacking]

Examples (from <https://sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf>):

- Discriminatory Hair Standards
- “Popular” discriminatory words or phrases that describe a specific group or race in a negative way.
- “You are so articulate/well-spoken.”
- Assuming “do you work here?” based off appearance

Open discussion to anyone that has experienced or witnessed microaggressions

ASK: Action/Inaction-What did you do? (if the microaggression was directed towards a group member)

How could a bystander have helped the situation?

What is their role in preventing these microaggressions from continuing to happen?

STATE: Microaggressions might seem removed from our lives as midshipmen, but that is not necessarily always the case. Here is an experience that a member of the class of 2015 dealt with.

PRESENT: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CEnQhl3FOhg/>

STATE: This chief's actions here are obviously directly hurtful, that he could not be bothered to differentiate between the two Black women he was meant to lead.

ASK (and DISCUSS): How do you think that you would feel in the shoes of the girl who was directly affected by this statement? How might you address this situation as a bystander? What if it was one of your friends who made the statement? What are some steps that could be taken here in company, class, the locker room, on the field, or even just behind closed doors here in Bancroft that you think would be effective in moving our attitude towards diversity and active inclusion in a positive direction?

STATE: Bystander intervention and asking yourselves these types of questions are two parts of the verb of allyship. It is an action, and those are some ways to keep up your practice.

STATE: Now, I would like to move us into our next area of discussion: cultural appropriation. I recognize that this term may mean many things to different people, so I want to open up the floor to the group for anyone to provide any personal definitions of cultural appropriation before we watch a short video.

{Discussion}

STATE: We are going to see a few definitions and hear some differences between cultural appropriation and appreciation in our next video from PBS.

PRESENT: Cultural Appropriation vs. Appreciation Video

<https://www.kcts9.org/show/what-i-hear/episode/what-i-hear-cultural-appropriation-vs-appreciation>

STATE: Now that we all have some common background on cultural appropriation and appreciation, does anyone want to share ways in which they appreciate the cultures of others, or how they might want to differently now?

[Discuss]

STATE: Thank you all for your responses. Before we pivot away from cultural appropriation, I do want to add that when we talk about the culture of Black people, we are adjacent to a wide variety of cultures that come from the African diaspora. Between 1500 and 1900, many millions of African people were transported around the world, largely for slavery. Across the globe, the descendants of African peoples are present and often experience many types of discrimination. Geographic separation has also resulted in widely diverse cultures across the global diaspora and this is something we should all keep in mind when thinking about Black culture. Does anyone have any additions to that? We know it is a big chunk of information.

[Time for discussion]

STATE: To tie all of the last two sections together, we have a table to present about the Fleet.

STATE: Thank you all for your participation in discussing stereotypes and culture. As we move into our next topic area, I would like to revisit some material from earlier this morning. Can we, as a group, list all of the methods of allyship that we covered earlier? Don't be afraid to shout them out, and we'll try to get the whole list down before jumping into our next topic.

[Time for the group to recall the allyship methods from earlier]

STATE: Awesome, I'm glad everyone held onto what we learned earlier. I asked us to recall these so that we could focus on a few of them specifically. One of the most difficult, but rewarding things that allies can do is to have difficult conversations in their own spheres of influence. This includes at home, at USNA, in the Fleet, etc. While this is not necessarily being publicly confrontational, we should recognize that private conversations can be just as nerve-racking as giving a speech to a large group.

ASK: Would anyone like to share an experience of a difficult conversation that they have had in the past?

[Discussion Time]

[Allow for group discussion/inputs; Lacking those, you might input a story of your own or a story from social media or another reading you've done]

STATE: These sorts of conversations can clearly make us feel a range of emotions, from stress and anxiety to confusion and frustration. If we engage in a tough conversation with someone else that might confront some of their preconceived notions, or schema, to throwback to plebe leadership, we should probably expect the same of them.

STATE: When talking about race and ethnicity and privilege, we also open ourselves up to new challenges and specific challenges that may not have been present in earlier difficult conversations. I do not want to alienate anyone if they have any issues with this terminology, but frankly I am skirting around white fragility. Would we like to take a moment to discuss any reactions or emotions that mentioning white fragility might have brought up in the group?

[open up for discussion, trying to feel out any adverse reactions and possibly asking people directly]

STATE: For the purposes of further discussion, I hope that we can use a formal definition of white fragility in our broader conversation about challenges to allyship. We have one here that I will read to the group, and we will try to unpack it to get a full understanding of the term.

Present: "White Fragility is a state in which...racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium. Racial stress results from [a disruption to the] racially familiar."

STATE: That is a lot to take in, a strong statement from Robin DiAngelo. We should remind ourselves that she has worked for decades in whiteness studies and as a diversity educator for over 20 years. None of us should expect ourselves to mirror those experiences and her wealth of knowledge right now, but we can unpack her definition and use it to navigate responses to conversations surrounding race.

[Plan on breaking down the definition word by word for the audience, asking group members to give their own opinions/definitions/restatements of DiAngelo's definition]

[Here, I think it would be helpful for presenters to choose one or two of the specific challenges to whiteness that Robin DiAngelo lays out and give their own takes on them to help explain the different impacts of these challenges and how they inform white fragility (see the appendix below)]

ASK: What might you do when someone you are talking to has one of these racially defensive/white fragility reactions? Has anyone faced another midshipman or other peer who might have experienced some defensiveness or white fragility when talking about race?

[Discuss the experiences of the group]

STATE: Obviously, these conversations can be difficult to foster effectively. We would like to share some strategies for getting through these conversations.

[Discuss strategies for difficult conversations, asking people to explain their viewpoints, giving them the floor, reassuring them that often discomfort is necessary for growth]

STATE: One important practice of allyship besides facing discomfort ourselves is guiding others who we can reach through their discomfort when dealing with racial dialogues. This may be especially important as we reach the Fleet and interact with a workforce that is much more diverse than the Naval Academy. In order to foster healthy discussions between ourselves and other officer, our divisions, and individual Sailors and Marines, we hope that having this discussion now might help inform you about some perspectives you might face.

ASK: Before we close, are there any areas that we would like to revisit or further discuss?

[Closing before heading back to the main group]

APPENDIX TO THE FACILITATORS

A. White fragility

a. Bible here is Robin DiAngelo

i. PDF by ^

- <https://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/viewFile/249/116>

ii. Long definition of White Fragility from the above:

- “White Fragility is a state in which...racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium. Racial stress results from [a disruption to the] racially familiar.” <--presented pretty steeped in theory

iii. The list of challenges to whiteness that DiAngelo includes is pretty neat (small font so it doesn't take over the page), something to maybe display different interactions that we could have or expect to have in being allies/having conversations with others in our lives:

- Suggesting that a white person's viewpoint comes from a racialized frame of reference (challenge to objectivity)
- People of color talking directly about their racial perspectives (challenge to white racial codes)
- People of color choosing not to protect the racial feelings of white people in regards to race (challenge to white racial expectations and need/entitlement to racial comfort)
- People of color not being willing to tell their stories or answer questions about their racial experiences (challenge to colonialist relations)
- A fellow white not providing agreement with one's interpretations (challenge to white solidarity)
- Receiving feedback that one's behavior had a racist impact (challenge to white liberalism)
- Suggesting that group membership is significant (challenge to individualism)
- An acknowledgment that access is unequal between racial groups (challenge to meritocracy)
- Being presented with a person of color in a position of leadership (challenge to white authority)
- Being presented with information about other racial groups through, for example, movies in which people of color drive the action but are not in stereotypical roles, or multicultural education (challenge to white centrality)

iv. View of whiteness (fragility and privilege) to restore the unstable racial equilibrium when faced by one of the above challenges

- v. How is White Fragility Strengthened/Fostered?
 - Segregation
 - White objectivity and individualism (being able to live outside of culture and not as part of a racialized group)
 - Universalism, that we are all human, applied to racism, becoming an apparatus to overlook race
 - Entitlement to Racial Comfort (identifying comfort with safety)
 - Racial Arrogance (limited understanding of racism→dismissing outside perspectives)
 - Racial Belonging (internalized/taken for granted)
 - Psychic Freedom (freedom from having to sense race/allows race to not only be an identity but also a construct that happens to POC, but not white people)
 - Messaging about the value of white people versus POC (media/art/news/etc)
- vi. Quote from Vodde (2001): "If privilege is defined as a legitimization of one's entitlement to resources, it can also be defined as permission to escape or avoid any challenges to this entitlement."
 - Article Title: De-centering privilege in social work education: Whose job is it anyway?
- vii. Language of violence in fragility reactions distorts historical direction of danger between white people and POC
- viii. Additionally, in confronting race in a society that likes to downplay its importance, white people become incoherent when attempting to address race
- ix. DiAngelo asserts that since white racism is ultimately a white problem, that we must take on the burden of interrupting it.

B. Breaking down stereotypes

- a. Throwback to Plebe Leadership
 - i. Schemas of People
 - Where do we learn these schema
 - a. Media
 - b. School
 - c. Household
 - Recognizing Schema and How they are based on these non-holistic descriptions of people
 - In media we might also call them character tropes (ways that creators include Black characters that we have seen time and again)

- b. How harmful are stereotypes?
 - i. They impact people across their lives, for example in medical care outcomes, education, job opportunities, and politics

C. Interacting with Black culture

- a. Realizing that Black, African, and other diaspora cultures are not monolithic
 - i. We don't aim to flatten
- b. Not taking for granted the source of what you may see as a dominant culture in different spheres
 - i. E.g. "internet slang" that is actually AAVE
 - ii. Recognizing the incredibly powerful influence that Black American culture, that it is often whitewashed into acceptance by the mainstream
 - iii. Examples
 - Protective hairstyles
 - Luxury items
 - The emergence and popularization of Y2K fashion

ending:

back to big group

email will come with resources list